

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY SANA

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INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA

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S E C R E T SANA 2818

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PDEV, PGOV, PINT, YE

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT AL-HAMDI ON YEMEN'S POLITICAL FUTURE

REF: SANA 2808

1. DURING MY JULY 20 MEETING WITH PRESIDENT AL-HAMDI TO DISCUSS THE TRIBAL SITUATION IN NORTH, (SEE REFTEL) WE ALSO DISCUSSED HIS PLANS FOR YEMEN'S POLITICAL FUTURE. STRESSING SEVERAL TIMES HIS DESIRE TO TURN YEMEN INTO A "MODEL FOR NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES AND PARTICULARLY FOR PDRY", AL-HAMDI UNDERSCORED HIS AIM TO ESTABLISH GENUINE DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS IN YEMEN WHICH WOULD THEREBY ENABLE HIM AND HIS MILITARY COLLEAGUES EVENTUALLY TO "WITHDRAW FROM THE POLITICAL SCENE".

2. AL-HAMDI CONTINUED THAT HE HAD PLANS FOR HOLDING POPULAR CONVENTIONS (MUTAMARAT SHA'BIYYA) IN TAIZ AND HODEIDAH IN LATE JUNE IN ORDER TO PREPARE THE GROUNDWORK FOR EVENTUAL ELECTIONS. UNFORTUNATELY ABDALLAH AL-HAJRI'S RECENT ASSASSINATION AS WELL AS CURRENT TRIBAL TROUBLES HAVE CAUSED THE GOVERNMENT TO DELAY HOLDING THESE CONVENTIONS. AL-HAMDI WENT ON TO SAY THAT HE NOW HOPES THE CONVENTIONS

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WILL BE HELD AFTER RAMADAN THIS FALL.

3. AL-HAMDI STATED THAT ALL YEMENIS WILL BE PERMITTED TO PARTICIPATE IN FREE ELECTIONS AS CANDIDATES INCLUDING SHAYKHS LIKE AL-AHMAR. THE LATTER, HOWEVE, MUST REALIZE THAT THE POLITICAL SIUTATION IN YEMEN IS CHANGING AND THAT SIMPLY BECAUSE ONE IS A SHAYKH DOES NOT

ENTITLE HIM TO POLITICAL POSITION OR PRIVILEGE. HE
CONTINUED THAT HE HOPES TO SEE IN YEMEN A FREELY ELECTED
MAJLIS AL-SHURA AS WELL AS DIRECT ELECTIONS FOR PRESIDENT
ALONG "THE AMERICAN LINE".

4. AL-HAMDI CLOSED BY SAYING THAT THE BEST WAY TO CHANGE
THE MARXIST REGIME IN SOUTH YEMEN IS BY DEMONSTRATING THAT
DEMOCRACY AND MODERATE ECONOMIC POLICIES ARE WORKING IN
NORTH YEMEN. HE EMPHASIZED THAT THIS IS THE GOAL WHICH HE
HAS SET FOR HIMSELF AND THAT WITH GOD'S HELP AND THE HELP
OF YEMEN'S TRUE FRIENDS HE WILL SUCCEED.

5. COMMENT: AL-HAMDI HAS SEVERAL TIMES IN THE PAST GONE
OVER WITH ME HIS PLANS FOR YEMEN'S POLITICAL FUTURE, ESPE-
CIALLY CONCERNING FREE ELECTIONS OF A MAJLIS AL-SHURA.
THIS IS THE FIRST TIME, HOWEVER, THAT HE HAS MENTIONED
DIRECT RELECTIONS FOR PRESIDENT. A DIRECTLY ELECTED
PRESIDENT MAY WELL BE THE WAY BY WHICH AL-HAMDI AND HIS
MODERATE MODERNIZERS HOPE TO SETTLE ONCE AND FOR ALL THE
QUESTION OF SHAYKHLY POLITICAL PRETENSIONS. FOR, IN SUCH
AN ELECTION IT IS UNLIKELY THAT A SHAYKH WOULD DO WELL IN
THE MORE POPULOUS CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN REGIONS OF THE COUNTRY

WHERE ZAYDI SHAYKHS ARE POLITICALLY UNACCEPTABLE. THERE
IS ALSO NO DOUBT THAT SUCH AN ELECTION WOULD BE TAILOR-MADE
FOR AL-HAMDI WITH HIS ZAYDI-SHAFAI BACKGROUND AND HIS BROAD
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POPULAR SUPPORT. THUS, AL-HAMDI WOULD FIND IT HARD TO
RESIST (IF HE REALLY WANTS TO) RUNNING, DESPITE HIS OFT-
EXPRESSED DESIRE TO WITHDRAW FROM PUBLIC LIFE. BE THAT
AS IT MAY, I BELIEVE THAT AL-HAMDI IS SINCERE WHEN HE TALKS
ABOUT MAKING YEMEN A MODEL AND IT IS IN THIS CONNECTION
THAT WE AND OUR SUADI FRIENDS HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY IN
ORDER TO HELP AL-HAMDI AND HIS MODERATE PRO-WESTERN
SUPPORTERS ACHIEVE THAT GOAL.
SCOTES

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